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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Sub-Commission on Prevention of
Discrimination and Protection
of Minorities
Working Group on Indigenous Populations
Fourteenth session
29 July-2 August 1996
Item 7 of the provisional agenda

INTERNATIONAL DECADE OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Activities of the Centre for Human Rights, July 1995-June 1996

1. In its resolution 48/163, of 21 December 1993, the General Assembly proclaimed the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, commencing on 10 December 1994, and emphasized the role of international cooperation in solving the problems faced by indigenous peoples in areas such as human rights, the environment, development, education and health.

2. In its resolution 49/214, of 23 December 1994, concerning the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, the General Assembly adopted the short-term programme of activities for 1995 set out in annex II to the report of the Secretary-General (A/49/444), most of which has been carried out. Certain activities, such as the regional workshop for indigenous women, were not carried out on account of the lack of funds and the organization of numerous meetings for women throughout the world, involving indigenous women, in connection with the Fourth World Conference on Women.

3. In conformity with the provisions of the above resolutions, the following activities have, inter alia, been carried out: ceremonies at United Nations Headquarters in New York and the United Nations Office at Geneva on 9 August 1995, involving indigenous people, Governments and non-governmental organizations, to commemorate the International Day of Indigenous People.

During these events an analysis was made of the most significant aspects of human rights of concern to indigenous people. In other regions of the world, cultural activities were organized and analyses were made, at the initiative of indigenous organizations themselves and of some Governments, relating to the human rights situation and other important aspects of the life of indigenous peoples, in connection with the commemoration of the above Day.

4. In its resolution 50/157, of 21 December 1995, the General Assembly adopted the programme of activities for the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People. The aim and purpose of the programme for the Decade was formulated, with an emphasis on the role of international cooperation in solving the economic, social and cultural problems of indigenous people. The importance of education as a means of solving the problems facing indigenous people was proclaimed, as was the need to promote and protect their human and traditional rights.

5. The same resolution urges the different social actors to comply with the resolutions relating to indigenous people adopted by the world conferences. It attaches particular importance to the possible establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people within the United Nations. Another of the Decade's objectives is the adoption of the draft United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, and the subsequent formulation of international and national norms for the protection and promotion of the human rights of indigenous people.

6. The Centre for Human Rights was represented at a number of meetings and international conferences held to promote the aims and issues of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, and in particular at the Global Indigenous Cultural Olympics/Summit for Peace and Sustainable Development (GICOS), held at Manila from 25 February to 3 March 1996, and organized by the Government of the Philippines, and at the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), held at Istanbul, Turkey, from 3 to 14 June 1996. The important issue of indigenous human settlements was discussed in plenary and a round table in which indigenous representatives took part, and the principles of sustainable development were reasserted.

7. After the Government of Canada had accepted the proposal, adopted in resolution 49/214, to hold an expert seminar on indigenous territorial rights, in March 1996 the Centre for Human Rights and the Government of Canada held the Expert Seminar on Practical Experience regarding Indigenous Land Rights and Claims, at Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada. The Seminar was attended by independent experts, government experts and experts from indigenous peoples from various parts of the world, who put forward proposals for the protection and development of the land and territories of the indigenous peoples.

8. In accordance with the provisions of resolution 50/157, the first meeting of the Advisory Group of the Voluntary Fund for the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People was held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 29 April to 1 May 1996. At the ninth session of the Board of Trustees of the Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations, in which a number of indigenous public figures participate, the Centre for Human Rights invited the representatives of three donor Governments, a representative of the United Nations Development Programme and the Chairperson of the Working Group

on Indigenous Populations to join the Fund's Advisory Group at its first meeting. The Advisory Group decided to draw up guidelines and a questionnaire (see annexes I and II), to submit requests for financial support to the Voluntary Fund for the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People and to consider, in the near future, the analysis and adoption of projects put forward by and on behalf of indigenous people.

9. At its first meeting, the Advisory Group recommended that the Centre for Human Rights should give priority to the following proposals, depending on the availability of funds from the Voluntary Fund for the Decade: to organize a second international workshop on the permanent forum for indigenous peoples recommended by General Assembly resolution 50/157; to develop a project for short-term scholarships to provide indigenous leaders with training and practical experience on human rights and the United Nations system, in conjunction with indigenous peoples' organizations and non-governmental organizations at Geneva; to sponsor, in conjunction with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the human rights training programme for indigenous representatives and official delegates of the Governments of Peru and Ecuador; and to provide technical support for an information workshop on the draft declaration of the rights of the indigenous people of the Pacific and Asia region, proposed by the Government of Fiji. Finally, it recommended that the necessary assistance should be provided to the indigenous project of the East Africa Regional Information Office, in conformity with the guidelines drawn up.

Annex I

INTERNATIONAL DECADE OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLE
VOLUNTARY FUND FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE
FIRST MEETING OF THE ADVISORY GROUP
(Geneva, 29 April-1 May 1996)

GUIDELINES

Objectives of the Voluntary Fund

- to support the programme of activities adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 50/157

- to provide assistance to projects and programmes advancing the goal of the International Decade: international cooperation for the solution of problems faced by indigenous people in such areas as human rights, the environment, development, education, culture and health

Who can apply

- indigenous peoples, communities and organizations, non-governmental organizations and academic and other similar institutions; organizations should be non-profit-making

- national committees for the Decade

- intergovernmental organizations and Governments with proposals for joint or "partnership" projects in cooperation with indigenous peoples

Main project areas

- the programme of activities and objectives of the Decade as well as the recommendations of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action as they relate to indigenous people

- indigenous organizational structures and procedures and their strengthening through education, training and institution- and capacity-building, bearing in mind the need to respect their relevant traditions

- education and training in human and indigenous rights

- information about indigenous peoples and the International Decade

- communications and exchanges between the United Nations system and indigenous peoples and between indigenous peoples

- fund-raising initiatives in furtherance of the objectives of the Decade

Criteria for selection

- projects should be of direct benefit to indigenous people in all parts of the world

- projects should be prepared by or in full consultation with indigenous people

- projects will be considered taking into account gender balance

- particular consideration will be given to projects from underdeveloped areas in different regions

- projects will be approved in relevant areas including in particular those relating to the promotion, protection and implementation of human and indigenous rights

Annex II

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR APPLICANTS TO THE VOLUNTARY FUND

1. Please give the project title.

2. Describe the main objective(s) of the project. Please also indicate how the project relates to one of the six main projects areas.

3. Provide a summary of the project, including information about how it will be implemented.

4. What is the executing organization? Please provide information about the organization, including information about membership, past activities and projects as well as relevant financial details. Provide information about any partner organizations.

5. What are the expected benefits for indigenous people? What is the expected follow-up to the project?

6. What is the duration of the project, including information about each phase of the project?

7. What are the total costs of the project, including breakdown of proposed expenditures? What is the contribution requested from the Voluntary Fund? What are the other sources of funding? How will the accounting of the project be managed?

8. How will the project be evaluated? Are the results quantifiable?

PROJECTS SHOULD BE SENT TO THE SECRETARIAT BEFORE 15 MARCH EACH YEAR.

APPLICATIONS FOR THE VOLUNTARY FUND WILL BE CONSIDERED ANNUALLY IN APRIL.

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE VOLUNTARY FUND WILL NOT EXCEED US$ 50,000.

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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Sub-Commission on Prevention
of Discrimination and
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Working Group on Indigenous Populations
Fourteenth session
29 July-2 August 1996
Item 8 of the provisional agenda

CONSIDERATION OF A PERMANENT FORUM FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Note by the Secretariat

1. At its thirteenth session the Working Group on Indigenous Populations had before it the report of the workshop on the possible establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people within the United Nations (E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.4/1995/7), held in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 1995/30. In its report (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1995/24), the Working Group expressed its warm appreciation to the Government of Denmark and the Homerule Government of Greenland for organizing the workshop in Copenhagen. The Working Group recommended that the report of the Copenhagen workshop be circulated to Governments and intergovernmental and indigenous organizations for their comments.

2. The Working Group on Indigenous Populations supported the idea that a permanent forum should be established in the course of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People and considered that it would be appropriate for such a forum to report to the Economic and Social Council, and that its mandate should cover issues such as human rights, health, development, environment, education and culture. The Working Group also expressed the view that such a forum should be open to all indigenous people, regardless of whether they had consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.

3. The Working Group recommended that a further workshop be held prior to its fourteenth session, and that the next workshop elaborate further the practical aspects relating to the establishment of such a forum. The Working Group also recommended that the Secretary-General should review existing procedures and programmes within the United Nations relating to indigenous people.

4. The Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities endorsed the Working Group's recommendations in its resolution 1995/39 of 24 August 1995, including the recommendation that the Centre for Human Rights organize a second workshop on a possible permanent forum for indigenous people, and that the Secretary-General prepare a review of existing mechanisms, procedures and programmes within the United Nations for promotion and coordination of the rights of indigenous people. It also requested the Secretary-General to transmit the report of the workshop to Governments and intergovernmental and indigenous organizations inviting them to express their views and to report on the comments and suggestions received to the Working Group on its fourteenth session. Notes verbales and letters together with copies of the report of the workshop were sent on 10 January 1996. As of 31 May 1996, no comments or suggestions had been received.

5. The General Assembly, in its resolution 50/157, recommended that the Secretary-General, drawing on the expertise of the Commission on Human Rights, as well as the Commission on Sustainable Development and other relevant bodies, undertake a review, in close consultation with Governments and taking into account the views of indigenous people and of the existing mechanisms, procedures and programmes within the United Nations concerning indigenous people, and report to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. The General Assembly also recommended that the Commission on Human Rights, drawing on the results of the review and the Copenhagen workshop, consider the convening of a second workshop on the possible establishment of a permanent forum.

6. At its fifty-second session the Commission on Human Rights had before it the report of the workshop held in Copenhagen, the report of the Working Group, Sub-Commission resolution 1995/39 and General Assembly resolution 50/157. In its resolution 1996/41 of 19 April 1996, the Commission decided to continue consideration of a second workshop at its fifty-third session. It requested the Secretary-General to have the review completed and circulated to Governments, relevant intergovernmental organizations and indigenous organizations for their comments well in advance of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. The Commission also urged the relevant United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and financial institutions responsible for the existing relevant mechanisms, procedures and programmes to facilitate the review. The Commission further requested that the Working Group on Indigenous Populations at its fourteenth session give priority consideration to the possible permanent forum for indigenous people within the United Nations and contribute to the ongoing review.